

KILLING FIELDS

of WORLD WAR ONE

**DEATH AND DESTRUCTION
ON THE BATTLEFIELDS OF
THE GREAT WAR
1914-1918**



Cotter Bass



NO MAN'S LAND

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PROLOGUE

World War One, also known as the First World War, World War I, WWI, and The Great War, was a global war originating in Europe that lasted from July 28, 1914, until November 11, 1918.

Contemporaneously described as '***The War to End All Wars***,' more than 70 million military personnel, including 60 million Europeans, were mobilized in one of the largest wars in history. More than nine million combatants and seven million civilians died as a result of the war (including the victims of several genocides), a casualty rate exacerbated by the belligerents' technological and industrial sophistication and the tactical stalemate caused by grueling trench warfare. It was one of the deadliest conflicts in history and precipitated major political change, including the Revolutions of 1917–1923, in many of the nations involved. Unresolved rivalries at the end of the conflict contributed to the start of the Second World War twenty-one years later.

The war attracted all the world's great economic powers, assembled in two opposing alliances: the Allies (based on the Triple Entente of the Russian Empire, the French Third Republic, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland) versus the Central Powers of Germany and Austria-Hungary. Although Italy was a member of the Triple Alliance alongside Germany and Austria-Hungary, it did not join the Central Powers, as Austria-Hungary had taken the offensive against the terms of the alliance.

These alliances were reorganized and expanded as more nations entered the war: Italy, Japan, and the United States joined the Allies, while the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria joined the Central Powers.

The trigger for the war was the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, by Yugoslav nationalist Gavrilo Princip in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914. This set off a diplomatic crisis when Austria-Hungary delivered an ultimatum to the Kingdom of Serbia. As a result, entangled international alliances formed over the previous decades were invoked.

Within weeks, the major powers were at war and the conflict soon spread around the world.



**FRENCH ASSAULT AT THE SECOND BATTLE
OF ARTOIS; ca. MAY 9 to JUNE 18, 1915**

Russia was the first to order a partial mobilization of its armies on July 25, 1914, and when Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia on July 28, Russia declared general mobilization on July 30. Germany presented an ultimatum to Russia to demobilize and when this was refused, it declared war on Russia on August 1. Being outnumbered on the Eastern Front, Russia urged its Triple Entente ally France to open a second front in the West.

Japan entered the war on the side of the Allies on August 23, 1914, seizing the opportunity of Germany's distraction with the European War to expand its sphere of influence in China and the Pacific.

More than forty years earlier, in 1870, the Franco-Prussian War had ended the Second French Empire and France had ceded the provinces of Alsace-Lorraine to a unified Germany. The determination to retake Alsace-Lorraine made the acceptance of Russia's plea for help an easy choice; France began full mobilization on August 1, 1914 and, on August 3, Germany declared war on France. The border between France and Germany was heavily fortified on both sides. According to the Schlieffen Plan, Germany then invaded neutral Belgium and Luxembourg before moving toward France from the north, leading the United Kingdom to declare war on Germany on August 4, 1914, due to Germany's violation of Belgian neutrality.

THE CALL TO ARMS

At the beginning of 1914 the British Army had a reported strength of 710,000 men including reserves, of which approximately 80,000 were regular troops ready for war. By the end of the First World War, almost 1 in 4 of the total male population of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, more than five million men, had enlisted. Of these men, nearly 3 million joined as Volunteers while almost 3 million were conscripts.

On April 6, 1917 the United States joined its allies - Britain, France, and Russia - to fight in World War I. Under the command of Major General John J. Pershing, more than 2 million U.S. soldiers fought on battlefields in France.



ERNEST HEMINGWAY, A YOUNG REPORTER, WAS REPEATEDLY REJECTED FOR MILITARY SERVICE, BUT HE FINALLY MANAGED TO SIGN UP FOR AMBULANCE DUTY IN ITALY AS A MEMBER OF AN AMERICAN RED CROSS FIELD SERVICE UNIT. THREE MONTHS LATER HE WAS INJURED ON THE AUSTRO-ITALIAN FRONT



MANFRED ALBRECHT FREIHERR VON RICHTHOFEN, KNOWN AS THE 'RED BARON,' WAS A FIGHTER PILOT WITH THE GERMAN AIR FORCE. CONSIDERED THE ACE-OF-ACES OF WWI, HE WAS SHOT DOWN AND KILLED NEAR VAUX-SUR-SOMME, FRANCE

KILLING FIELDS



A FATHER, AN OFFICER OF THE SERBIAN ARMY, MOURNS HIS SON, A FALLEN SOLDIER



GERMAN MACHINE-GUN NEST AND DEAD GUNNER AT VILLERS DEVY DUN SASSEY, FRANCE, NOVEMBER 4, 1918, ONE WEEK BEFORE THE END OF THE WAR



**FRENCH SOLDIERS, SOME WOUNDED, SOME
DEAD, AFTER TAKING COURCELLES, IN
THE DEPARTMENT OF OISE, FRANCE,
ca. JUNE 1918**



**DOG EATING REMAINS OF DEAD
SOLDIER, ca. 1917**

GOING HOME

World War I was one of the most terrifying events in the history of mankind. The war was so incredibly destructive due to the life-altering physical and mental effects for soldiers and their families. Soldiers were considered heroes when they arrived home. Upon their return, numerous street parties were held to thank them for their gallant service.

For the 18 million military personnel and civilians who perished in World War I, there was no 'going home' in the traditional sense. Rather, **home** became one of the more than 4,000 military cemeteries and memorials around the world.



**FRENCH MILITARY CEMETERY AT THE DOUAUMONT
OSSUARY CONTAINING THE REMAINS OF MORE
THAN 130,000 UNKNOWN SOLDIERS**

DEVASTATION

The First World War cut a swath of destruction across Europe, leaving centuries-old towns and hallowed buildings in ruins. Rebuilding took generations.

Even before the Armistice on November 11, 1918, some of the local population was beginning to return from their places of refuge. Every building was shattered and in ruins: houses, shops, municipal buildings, schools, cathedrals, and churches were gone. It would be a seemingly insurmountable task to rebuild the devastated landscape to its original state.



RUINS AT PAS DE CALAIS, FRANCE

EPILOGUE



Before the ink had dried on the Armistice of 1918, many politicians, military experts, journalists, illuminati, and soothsayers openly and unabashedly declared World War One to be 'The War to End All Wars.' While seemingly prophetic at that time, this bold pronouncement proved to be painfully flawed. A mere 21 years later, Adolph Hitler and the German military machine attacked Poland resulting in the birth of World War II. Throughout the balance of the 20th century and beyond, armed conflicts, whether politically defined as police actions or all-out war, have continued to plague mankind.



**Whoever sows injustice will reap
calamity, and the rod of his
fury will fail.**

Proverbs 22:8